

NSC BRIEFING

10 July 1957

SOVIET LEADERSHIP: NARRATIVE OF EVENTS

- I. Main lines of the conflict are clear, although many versions of various meetings circulating.
 - A. Many differences had probably developed in top levels of party since 20th Congress especially over ways of handling Satellites and coping with dissatisfied intellectuals at home, but immediate issue was political aspects of domestic economic policy.
 - B. By last December, shortcomings in the economy, combined with the shattering world-wide effects of the Polish and Hungarian events, had brought Khrushchev's prestige to its nadir.
 1. At a Central Committee Plenum ^{the day} the problems of Soviet economic growth came under review. Result was an economic plan for 1957 in which the rate of growth was appreciably reduced--to orthodox Communists an unacceptable expedient.
 - C. This apparently gave Khrushchev a chance to take the offensive and at another Plenum in February he came forward with a scheme for the reorganization of economic control on a regional basis, which, he probably argued, would make it possible to restore the rate of growth. Since this measure would largely break up the central govt bureaucracy, he may also have intended it as a weapon against his more orthodox enemies in that apparatus.

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1. Though this measure meant a far-reaching change, it was rammed through in rapid order, evidently against the opposition of Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich, and perhaps of Pervukhin and Saburov, the two economic specialists who have also been ~~dropped from the Presidium~~.

2. All these men had key posts and great influence in the govt bureaucracy.

D. There may have been further disagreement over the formulation of a revised Sixth Five-Year Plan, due before 1 July, which has yet to appear. Also over the new project which Khrushchev has imposed on the plan--overtaking the U. S. in the output of meat and dairy products before 1960.

II. The opposition faction's disagreement with Khrushchev over one or all of these issues and perhaps their resentment at the high-handed way in which he had pushed through the reorganization plan apparently provoked them into a countermove.

A. They committed the heinous sin of taking their quarrel outside the Party Presidium in a search for support.

1. They may have tried to capitalize on dissatisfaction among the economic administrators who were displaced by the reorganization.

2. They may have felt a countermove had to be made soon, before the reorganization had permanently reduced their power.

B. When Khrushchev returned from Finland on 14 June he was met at the station by six of his Presidium colleagues, Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, Nikoyan, Pervukhin and Saburov. The

three dissidents (Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich) asked that a

meeting of the Presidium be summoned to discuss speeches to be made by the leaders in Leningrad on 22 June.

C. When the Presidium met on 18 June, three full members were absent--Kirichenko was in Kiev, Saburov was in Warsaw, and Suslov was vacationing away from Moscow, probably in the Crimea.

1. The key players had had a busy day. During the day Khrushchev had had an interview with the editor of a Japanese newspaper. Later he, together with Bulganin, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Malenkov, Mikoyan, Molotov, Pervukhin, Zhukov, Furtseva, Shepilov and Brezhnev received a group of Hungarian "journalists."

D. The Presidium meeting probably began as soon as the Hungarians had departed.

1. In addition to the three full members, three candidates members were missing--Kozlov was in Leningrad, Mukhitdinov was in Tashkent, and Shvernik in UFA.

2. One of the three opposition leaders, probably Molotov, opened the attack on Khrushchev. Khrushchev was accused of high-handedness in announcing the cancellation of deliveries from the peasants' private plots before this policy had been fully agreed on. Molotov denounced him as "an opportunist without an ideological base" and demanded that he resign as First Secretary and that a number of other important party and government posts be filled with the opposition group's nominees.

3. In the angry debate which followed Molotov was supported by Malenkov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov. (Candidate members may speak but not vote.) Pervukhin and allegedly Bulganin

added their own recriminations. Possibly they were joined by Voroshilov.

E. Khrushchev was defended by Mikoyan, Zhukov, Brezhnev and Furtseva. He argued that a decision to remove him would have to be taken by the Central Committee--where he controls a majority--in accordance with the Party statutes and "Leninist" principles.

1. Whether Zhukov threatened at this point to use the army we do not know but his support may have been enough to win Khrushchev a majority.
2. This may have been the line-up: for calling the Central Committee--Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Bulganin, Voroshilov and Pervukhin; against--Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich.
3. At this point Khrushchev's victory was virtually assured. Next day he attended a Yugoslav reception in the company of Bulganin, Mikoyan and Marshal Zhukov.

III. The party machinery was rapidly set in motion. Within four days approximately 300 people--of whom Khrushchev could count on at least 60%--had gathered in Moscow. (Several ~~SOVIET~~ ^{SOVIET} ambassadors practically fell over themselves to get back to Moscow on time: Pegov, in Iran, scrambled across border without awaiting exit visit; Vinogradov, in Paris, called Foreign Office in middle of night for visa; Ponomarenko, in Warsaw, pulled out leaving aide to cancel scheduled tennis date with New York Times correspondent.)

A. The Central Committee and Party Auditing Commission met June 22-29 during which Khrushchev's opponents apparently made a last-ditch effort to stave off political disaster.

B. As First Secretary of the Party Khrushchev would have had first word before the Central Committee. Either he, or someone designated by him, opened the session by calling for discussion of the internal condition of the Party.

1. Molotov countered with a demand for discussion of unorthodoxy in the Satellites and in foreign Communist parties.

C. The motion against Molotov's proposal was made by a provincial party secretary, Andrei Kirilenko, who is plainly a Khrushchev partisan. The pro-Khrushchev move won.

D. This pattern was probably repeated over and over throughout the eight days. Each of Khrushchev's opponents, now reduced to Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Shepilov, was allowed to defend himself at length and was in turn rebutted by selected Khrushchev men.

E. According to some press accounts [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the coup de grace was applied on the next-to-last day of the session by Marshal Zhukov. Once he had spoken for Khrushchev, these reports state, the opposition collapsed and confessed its guilt.

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